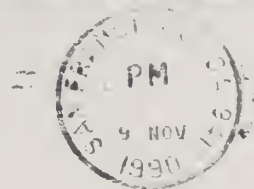


Lance Alexander
1377 11th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
94122



John Law
1256 6th Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94122



Lance Alexander
1377 11th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
94122

November 7, 1990

John Law
1256 6th Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94122

Hello John,

The San Francisco Cacophony Society is now somewhat over four years old. It's very survival astounds me; it's success even more so. Apparently we are on the right track and have the right people participating. Nevertheless, in the midst of this success I am beginning to hear a nagging question. I first heard it in my own mind some months ago. Later I heard it from Wanda Hoberg, the writer who is doing the story for The City magazine. Most recently I have heard it from a variety of people involved with Cacophony.

The question goes something like this: Cacophony seems to have a number of serious, intelligent people involved in it. People who are willing to spend time, money and energy creating unusual events to share with each other and the public, Yet despite all of this I can't see what it adds up to. What's the philosophy or purpose behind the organization? What are you trying to achieve? Is there a coherent purpose that guides the actions of the people who put on the events and where will it lead the group in future?

Hidden or personal agendas aside, what is the answer to these questions?

In an attempt to satisfy my own curiosity on the subject as well as provide a forum for the discussion of the SFCS's future I would like you to participate in a conference letter on the subject. Here's how it works:

- 1) write me a letter telling me what you think is the answer to any or all of the above questions, It can be as long or as short as you want it to be, Mail it to me by December 15th.
- 2) Upon receipt of these letters I will copy all of them, just as I have received them, and mail a complete set of them to each of the participants.
- 3) The participants are then ask to write comments or rebuttals to the original letters and mail them to me by January 15th.
- 4) I will then copy these and mail copies to all respondents.

The reason that I have decided to ask this question in a written format as opposed to getting together in a group over beers and discussing it is that I hope that having to answer the questions in writing will give people an opportunity to carefully think out their answers at length and in some detail. Also it allows all of the people involved to have an equal voice. It keeps the more strident and argumentative types (Who me ?) from dominating the conversation and not paying attention to the more quiet and thoughtful members of the group, Finally, written statements will give the respondents time to carefully read and consider their fellow society member's remarks at length and appreciate all of their genius and all of it's ramifications.

By way of getting the discussion rolling, some of my own concerns center around several topics, One is the question of participation versus entertainment or parties as events. A second is the tension that exists between control and spontaneity that exists in a group with an essentially anarchistic structure. A third is the question of whether or not the group could perhaps accommodate a number of well defined special interest factions within it without fragmenting.

Finally, I have chosen those people who I am sending this to not because they are the leaders of, or have any authority over, Cacophony. I have chosen them because of their level of interest and activity in the group. Most probably, the real reason is that I made my choice in a thoroughly arbitrary and personal manner, choosing people who I find interesting and whose opinions I would enjoy reading. As such this is a personal project, (perhaps it's an event) and I make no claim for it as any sort of 'official' Cacophony project.

The following people have been ask to participate in this conference letter:

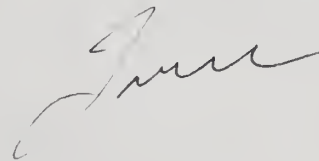
Carrie Galbraith	John Law	Michael ²
Dean Gustafson	Louise Jarmilowicz	Kevin Evans
P. Segal	Larry Harvey	Rob Schmidt
Jayson Wechter	Charlie Sweeney	Louis Brill

7
If you feel that I have left anyone important off of the list please copy this letter and pass it on to them.

Hope to hear from you soon...

Sincerely,

DAVE
WARREN!



RETURN
TO
J. WAW
1256 6th AVE
SF. CA. 94122

FOREWORD

The original aim in initiating this conference letter was to see if a positive definition of what the Cacophony Society is and does could be arrived at. We have tended to define the organization in negative terms; not having any rules, any officers, any mandatory meetings, and no requirements for what an event is or should be. But at this time, when we are beginning to see a dramatic growth in the society, in the number of members and events, as well as increased public exposure, I'm not sure that this is to our advantage. If we can arrive at some idea of who we are collectively, and what it is that we want to do, as individuals and as a group, we will be better able to take advantage of the opportunities that this new growth and publicity affords us.

The strategy for arriving at this definition was twofold. First, getting people to write about the Cacophony Society would reveal the unstated assumptions that we all have about the organization. For example, those of ex-Suicide Club members might be different from those of people who have joined Cacophony more recently. I was interested in seeing which of the assumptions and visions of the group were shared. Second, seeing if the letters people sent to me revealed a rough consensus of what we are doing: if in fact there was already a positive definition of what we are doing and how we envision the future.

Whether or not this has succeeded in making unstated assumptions and group consensus visible, I leave to you. Read the letters and decide for yourselves.

Another reason for doing this was to stir things up, to undermine any sense of complacency and stagnation that might be growing in the group. If I have a hidden agenda, it involves trying to figure out ways to encourage the SFCS to move on to the next level of complexity, depth and excitement. Encouraging people to think about the group and share their thoughts are part of this. From what you have written to me, and from what some of you have said to me in conversations, this has succeeded. Now that this can of worms has been opened we are forced to find a larger can...

I hope you enjoy reading the letters, examining first hand the similarity and diversity of ideas of just who we are and what we are doing.

November 12, 1990

Dear Lance:

I want to thank you for your effort with your inquiring letter. I appreciate the format that you have suggested, which allows the less argumentive types to have an equal chance along with the more boisterous types, at having their thoughts heard. So here goes with my response...

I have been involved with the Cacophony Society since the first month of its creation, in September 1986. At that time, I was living a very unsocial life; I was focusing almost all of my energies on my art and shunning normal human contact. In September of that year, I decided that I should re-enter the world and make some new friends. Coincidentally, this was also the month that two different individuals told me about Cacophony and encouraged me to get involved. I went to a mask making "event" that weekend and have been deeply involved ever since. Cacophony has been my social life in the 4 years and 2 months since then. For me, Cacophony has been a great source of friends and experiences which I could never have on my own or even with a regular group of regular folks, even gifted ones. It's something about the energy and collective mind of Cacophony which makes the impossible, possible. I had also noticed that it was so easy to take the easy way out and slowly stop challenging myself. I could see myself gradually becoming like all those "mature" individuals who seemed to lack the vital spark of life, people who stopped asking questions, seldom did anything of deep significance and generally just faded into the corner. I didn't like this picture of myself, but I could feel it happening, just as it seemed to happen to so many adults that I knew.

These have been the two main reason that I have stayed with Cacophony Society these last four years (along with this insane urge I have developed to make and buy new costumes for each new event that I attend--I love to dress up!) I assume that everyone has a different reason for their involvement, but I imagine that there are probably something like 6 or 8 different categories of explanations. These will probably come out as other people respond to the letter.

Until about 6 months ago, I was mainly living in the present as far as Cacophony was concerned, aside from thinking about next month's events. About that time, I started hearing various people asking where we were headed. At first, I thought that this was an odd question...it seemed to go against the grain of spontaneity and anarchy that were part of our unspoken credo. In fact, people didn't seem to want to talk about where we were headed because it seemed like a strange academic exercise. However in the time since then, we have been receiving more and more publicity. All this coverage has caused us to think about ourselves, to reflect, question and to get kind of schizophrenic and think about ourselves in a third person sort of a way.

I'm still not sure where we're headed and I don't think that it's written in stone anywhere. It's up to everyone who's interested to determine that. But before we do that, we have to decide whether we want to decide. If we keep on keepin' on and don't make any 5-year plans, is that OK? And if we do end up drawing up some kind of credo, does this mean that we're turning into bureaucrats? To the former question, I could answer, "Perhaps" and to the latter, I could also answer, "Not necessarily." What I'm saying is that I'm feeling kind of flexible about this question. However, various persons whom I respect seem very concerned about the question about our future and because I respect them, I am willing to consider the question as well.

In response to "the question of participation versus entertainment or parties as events", with the emphasis here on small events which some might define as parties, I have some strong feelings. First, there has been a long history in Cacophony of "small" events, i.e. video events, poetry breakfasts, concept events such as photographing every bench in Golden Gate Park, the suicide note writing event and shopping for strange clothes in local thrift shops. These events were primarily all that existed at the beginning, except for occasional big idea events. Cacophony was a slow-growing concept, one which grew out of the Suicide Club, a wild and tempestuous and wonderful group, which I will not elaborate on here, except to say that I was one of the Suicide

Clubbers. We did the best we could at first. It was fun for me right from the beginning, except for those events which were mine and to which maybe only 2 or 3 people would show up. And sometimes, no one would show (after which, I would swear that I would never do another event again.) It was only after a couple of years that we started putting on the mondo events, to which dozens of folks would show up. There is no doubt that these events were the big successes because they tended to be outrageous and allowed people to do things that they probably wouldn't get to do on their own--events beyond the mainstream. However, just because these latter events are so popular, this is no reason to abandon the smaller events. The smaller events are easier and less expensive to produce. The mondo events tend to be incredibly expensive, often causing their producers to lose significant amounts of dough (to which they might respond, "Yeah, but it was worth it!") After attending one of the big events, a participant might feel like putting on an event, but feel unable to do so. I know that I always felt this way in the Suicide Club. I wanted to do something spectacular, but just couldn't figure out how to orchestrate one of those hair-raising escapades. (Each of us has our own strengths.) However, in Cacophony, someone might be able to see how s/he could do a smaller event. And smaller could mean as much fun for some as big. This is what "Anyone can do an event" means. I have never stopped encouraging people to do events if the idea sounds like a good one. I enjoy almost all events, but feel a great deal of happiness when a new-comer stages a "small" event which is a success, and because of this continues to come back for other events. This is a good way to gather new and involved Cacophonists. I would hate to see the large events be the only events which continue to run in the newsletter. This would be a form of censorship. However, since all events are generated by individuals and our current "credo" (such as it is) disallows any sort of censorship of events or submission to Rough Draft, I don't foresee a time when the smaller events would not be allowed. Besides, as the saying goes, "people vote with their feet."

My second point refers to "participation versus entertainment or parties." I don't believe that participation and entertainment are mutually exclusive. If someone goes to a Midnight Picnic and sits around a barbecue in a weird location, is this participation, passive entertainment or both? If someone goes to a Bacchanal, can we call this participation rather than an entertaining party? What I'm saying is that possibly we inflate the idea of Cacophony events into true feats of dynamic participation, when perhaps they may be elaborate parties. Just because someone refers to events as parties doesn't mean this is a bad thing, and I don't think we should try to eliminate any events which seem to suggest a party-like atmosphere. I don't think we should try to get more macho in order to do this.

As to "whether or not the group could perhaps accommodate a number of well-defined special interest factions within it without fragmenting", I believe this to be true. We have already done this to some extent. These are not solely Cacophony events, even if the Bay Guardian refers to them that way in the "Eight Days a Week" section of their newspaper. Formerly, whatever was listed in Rough Draft was a Cacophony event, but now that groups such as the Burning Man and the Bacchanal Cabal have started listing their events in the newsletter, this stretches the definition of what is a Cacophony event. I certainly don't think that we should take all the credit for these events. I also think that this is a terrific way to hook up with whole other groups of people. So far there hasn't been any weirdness around this idea and I'm not sure whether I can anticipate any at this time, but anything is possible.

Well, that's it for now. I'm looking forward to all the responses, which I hope will be plentiful.

Sincerely, .

Louise

Louise

SOUTHERN PACIFIC MEMORIAL HOSPITALS, INC.

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MEMORIAL



Lance -Thanks for your letter. You've brought up a number of serious, interesting at least, questions. In my usual thick as a brick state I tend to miss other peoples feelings about mutual projects unless they hit me with a two-by-four. I think that the best way for me to put forth my ideas in regard to your query would be to first define (personally, subjectively) this group we seem to have. Bare with me please for using the Suicide Club (the SFSC) as counter-point, antecedent, and in certain ways a model for Cacophony.

Cacophony is similar in my mind to the SFSC in the following ways:

- 1) It is a social club where people of similar backgrounds, interests and ideas can get together and fit in with some feeling of community.
- 2) Its theoretically open to all but in reality the only people who can work effectively in the group and be part of the social network are those who were like us at the out set.
(Luckily our shared goals and interests span a relatively large spectrum.)

I don't want to hang out with the Young Republicans but I know there are interesting people out there who could add a lot to our scene who wouldn't particularly feel (or be) welcome in the group.

Like the SFSC we have our own unwritten (largely) unintentional social mores.

- 3) Given these boundaries it is, nonetheless a group wherein members can (bolstered by the strength of numbers and collective support) push their limits and jointly create and participate in interesting and challenging adventures and interactions with the world at large.
- 4) A relatively small core group of people create the largest number of events (as in the last years of the SFSC).
- 5) Most events are participatory to some (varying greatly) degree.

Cacophony and the SFSC differ in my mind in these ways:

- 1) A relatively small core group of people create the largest number of of events. (The first year of the SFSC there were lots of individuals organizing events. This changed drastically later.)
- 2) The Early SFSC was very anarchic. Cacophony is not that centrally organized or controlled but it is much more so than the SFSC. Later in the Suicide Club history behind the scenes control became much more prevalent though it was denied (I was guilty of this myself).

We don't seem to have the same need to convince ourselves that all is equal and ours is am anarchic non organization. That was important to some heavily involved in the SFSC because it was true in the beginning of that group.

3) Publicity - what can I say ? Very different from the SFSC. Despite the Suicide Club's occasional local article it was pretty much an underground group that shunned publicity. Cacophony however is very media conscious.

There were some good reasons why we avoided publicity in the SFSC. Our general tone of events was much more clandestine and legally debatable than Cacophony's. This changed in later years for the SFSC. I feel now that we should have gone for publicity as the group began ossifying and becoming more incestuous as a means of getting new, different input.

We didn't and with other factors the Suicide Club suicided (after five fun years).

We know some of the dangers of publicity (and doubtless will learn new ones) but the benefits thus far to Cacophony have been, in my mind quite rewarding. Other very interesting groups know who we are. We have a public identity. This has been very valuable in interacting with these groups.

We've attracted a good number of strong, creative individuals through the articles and coverage. There is much more of a public record of the genuinely tangible things we've created (Got any pictures of the Fox Theatre extravaganza the Suicide Club pulled off in 1979 ?). These are all things that have thus far made Cacophony better and stronger than it could be. We may get dangerous nuts too, but if we don't take risks we won't survive.

4) We are a lot more high tech than the SFSC and we generally have more money and gadgets to (hopefully) enhance the events we create.

I know I've left out something but basically the preceding comparisons will, I hope, give you an understanding of my definition of Cacophony.

How to keep things moving so that Cacophony will remain a worthwhile and amazing phenomenon:

- 1) Keep Cacophony more in the role of an umbrella group open for all to include events but not necessarily listing the more dangerous (I.D. required !) events.
- 2) While perhaps encompassing a number of small secret cabals and sub-groups I feel that it is important to not sap the energy of the larger umbrella (Cacophony) by doing all of the interesting, challenging events outside of the newsletters open invitational.
- 3) Avoid cliquishness as much as possible, The Suicide Club was crippled by by late developing cliques and a lack of new people after Communiversitiy collapsed. This will be very difficult if not impossible to avoid if we don't stay aware of it.
- 4) Carefully screen potential press. If the press develops more interest in the group we should pick and choose. Once a journalist is onto you it is impossible to control what they will say or how they will portray you.

I believe that since we have put ourselves out there in the media's eye we cannot expect to control or dictate to them.

I hope that the long range benefits of press will outweigh any damage it may cause. Although we hung our butts out there and will have to contend with having a public image (of sorts) I don't believe we should encourage just any media outlet.

- 5) Try to diversify the type of events that are listed . The general criticism lately has been that so many of the events are elaborate theme parties, fun enough but not genuinely challenging or intellectually intriguing.

I believe that this has been true to some degree. So I think its time to do more weird stuff: Infiltrate the Young Republicans, evangelize the Christians , etc.....Do more elaborate role playing games... Have group mind-fuck intellectual games etc. etc. etc.

Don't stop having the elaborate theme parties, they're a hell of a lot of fun but they're not the only game around.

That's it for now, my mind just dried up. I'm sure I've missed a lot but tough shit.

Thanks for this event,

Yrs.

John

PS:

I just reread your initiatory letter and before signing off I would like to address one point I missed earlier.

What does it add up to ? Philosophy ? Purpose ? etc. ...

I think that if we work to keep our events and joint endeavors very eclectic and fresh and really push the limits of what we can do , our common purpose, goals, philosophy, whatever you want to call it will manifest itself entirely without any planning, deep intellectual debate or any thing . It's fine to talk about all this but I believe that if we analyze it too much or try to create an agenda or pattern for designing a 'philosophy' we are in danger of losing whatever it is that is the spirit of Cacophony.

Just keep the mechanism and encourage new people and new ideas. Work to avoid stultification and cliques and other bummers to the weird synthesis that is created through whatever kind of group mind it is that we've started.

I think we have some basic unspoken guidelines that seem to be tacitly accepted by most.

The old Suicide Club crypto-credos initiated by Gary Warne ("Live each day as though it were your last" Play it out to the end. etc. etc.) were good ones and to some degree live on in Cacophony. I believe that if we very very subtly infuse these ideas into our ongoing activities (along with whatever other philosophical concepts we seem to adhere too, 'Party Dude !!' or whatever) that it will be more than enough to sustain a general feeling of purpose and community within Cacophony.

If we analyze it and discuss it and debate it too much we might as well wait until the annotated edition comes along and then we shan't need the experience, we can just gorge ourselves on scholarly criticism.

Illusions don't do so very well in controlled scientific settings.

So there !

-J

Dear Folks:

First off, thanks to Lance for facilitating this exchange. His presentation was, I thought, fairly and logically presented.

My basic response to the questions concerning purpose and philosophy is "if it's not broke, don't fix it." One of the most appealing things about Cacophony is its lack of a defined purpose or philosophy. This has allowed it to be broadly encompassing, to be accessible to a very wide range of people and ideas. It has also allowed it to avoid the sort of nasty infighting and disagreements which seem to arise any time a diverse group of people try to agree on philosophical issues.

I see Cacophony as simply a vehicle for various individuals to present events to a possibly receptive audience. I like it being essentially transparent--having little if any identity of its own. I like the events to speak for themselves. I especially like the idea that anyone can create an event--that there are no philosophical standards by which it is judged. Participants vote with their feet. It's a party to which everyone is invited, and dress as you please.

Trying to saddle Cacophony with a philosophy could, I fear, bring out disagreements and dissensions which might not otherwise arise. And since it is such a fluid entity, adopting a specific philosophy or "purpose" seems contradictory. By its nature, it defies labeling, since it's really just a mixed up collection of personal visions. It could also make it less accessible.

I don't think there is a "coherent purpose" guiding the actions of event organizers. We all have our own visions and motivations, and I think we'd be much more boring if they were all of one stripe.

As for where it will lead the group in the future, well, I kind of like the unknown. But there are some practical issues which Lance has discussed, not raised in his letter, which may be at the crux of this.

One is whether Rough Draft is listing just events specific to Cacophony, or events produced by outside organizations not necessarily affiliated with Cacophony. In other words, can or will Rough Draft become an events bulletin board.

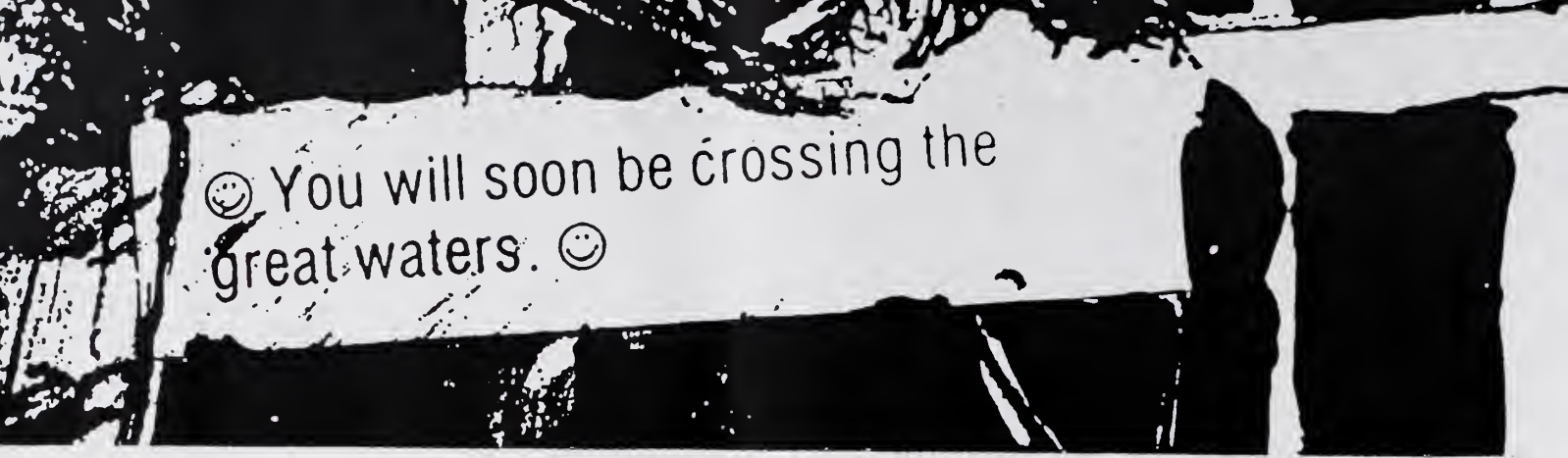
My opinion is to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion, as long as space allows. The Burning Man, Bacchus Awakes and the St. Stupid's Day parade are all "outside" events which were listed in Rough Draft, and which folks attended and greatly enjoyed. Making connections with the folks doing them was great.

The potential problem arises of what happens when we get too many such events to include in the newsletter. That hasn't happened yet. If it does, perhaps we could consider prioritizing events which are listed only through Rough Draft.

To be discussed further.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jayson', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jayson



☺ You will soon be crossing the
great waters. ☺

I'll set all the words of others out of my mind, if possible, and try to use this letter to articulate my own thoughts. "Live each day as if it is your last". The philosophy of doing things "beyond the pale of mainstream society" still holds. As it's said in the newsletter, "if you can think of it, you can do it!" Have fun. Create. Allow for spontaneity. Explore. Establish controlled situations and allow them to unfold-beyond controllability. Instead of giving power to the conspiracy, fuck with their heads. Creating situations not found in daily life and allowing for complete involvement beyond the creators possible plan, therefore affording spontaneous and surprising results brought about by interaction and participation of anyone who comes to participate. As to how many events have recently achieved this purpose...

Cacophony is unique. We have a "randomly gathered network of free spirits" who have discovered an actively creative and genuine friendship between us with an open mind for any new person who stumbles across our endeavors and begins to get involved. It's rare. It's very childlike, and it's fragile in this consumerist society. We have an opportunity for a group of thinking adults with the hearts of children and a multitude of talents to build and experience events, using the tools on hand, constantly re-creating and modifying those events. When creating events, I find that events that change and alter with each participant, such as adventure/theater events, to be the most stimulating and enjoyable of events. Heaven knows, I'm not opposed to a good party, but events that begin as something else and through lack of planning or misunderstanding, become parties, or are simply parties in disguise are self-defeating. Re-creation of old events or popular events does not bother me except when the re-created event has not changed and becomes nothing more than a retracing of steps. If one is educated on how to effectively host a successful event, well then the chances of an event promising much and delivering nothing are minimal, (although it seems to only take a host 1 or 2 events before they are aware of how to make it work). A handbook of guidelines on event coordination would be a useful tool for cacophony to produce and distribute (my book fetish is surfacing here).

What I am trying to achieve inside and outside of cacophony is at least twofold. First, the above. Yes, I am trying to achieve the purpose. It is still my main agenda. The other obvious reason I can see for my involvement is the development of the creative. The Cacophony society allows me a forum to explore and play with my creativity, whether within the framework of my events as director, creator, and participant, or within the framework of other events, as participant or helper. As for hidden agendas, I am not so certain that ones "hidden agenda" is such a bad thing. It is not ripping the group apart. With creative and spontaneous, thinking people, the herd instinct of one mind cannot exist. Hidden agendas happen. But if they are geared toward the creative, not toward power or control, then let them be. As for ego, that too will happen with people who have intelligence and ability. So far, it has only been on a few rare occasions that ego has gotten in the way. As long as it is healthy ego, I don't mind. Again, controlling, manipulative, using, ego I personally cannot tolerate. In both these areas, communication is the key. As for where we are going - I know I would like to see us do events of a larger magnitude, such as some of the plans for '91. I have my own personal interest in a few publishing endeavors, a few of them somehow related to Cacophony. I get frustrated sometimes, but it is based in my own creative uncertainties, not in anything Cacophony does or does not deliver. I think the Society works on many levels. If I didn't think so, I wouldn't stick with it. We have a lot of creative, strong minded (and willed) people working together. I can see it going further than just Friday nights at 11:00 pm at the baseball diamond. There is so much we can all do.

Yours in Christ,



Care Galbraith

P.S.: I appreciate this forum Lance.



15 November
Anno Novus Bacchus XIII

Lance Alexander
1377 11th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94122

Dear Lance and fellow Cacophonists:

Greetings from The Inner Sanctum of The Bacchanal Cabal!

I would first like to thank you, Lance, for the honor and privilege of being invited to your forum here. I'm quite flattered and pleased that you consider me worthy of such distinction. I shall endeavor here in my reply to warrant such attention.

First of all, let me say that I agree with your assessment that The San Francisco Cacophony Society is "on the right track and have the right people participating." Cacophony's recent media interest and larger, more elaborate events such as Larry Harvey's Burning Man and Louise Jarmilowicz and Friends' Exquisite Corpse attest to this fact. I hope also that in the months and years to come that The B.C. shall also play a higher profile role in the success of Cacophony. That, among other things, is one of our goals in the months ahead.

There were a great number of questions and sub-questions in your letter, so I will answer them directly and in the order that you raised them:

* Regarding the "nagging questions" about What Is Cacophony? from people such as Wanda Hoberg, Senior Editor of The City magazine.

Nothing personal at all about Wanda, but quite simply -- she's a reporter! Reporters and others in the media are spectators. Most everything looks weird, strange and unfathomable to these folks because they are viewing life from the viewpoint of being outside what's happening. I, for one, have been a member of the Church of Scientology for over six years -- both as a public individual taking courses offered there -- and as a part-time staff member

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working actually inside the Church doing artwork and promotions for Dianetics. If you were to believe all the black PR and smear campaigns directed to the Church for the past thirty years issued from "reliable sources" -- then, I'm afraid, you should join the ranks of such people as Reverend Larry Lea! The media makes its living by portraying anything they don't understand as strange, weird, bizarre, dangerous, etc., etc. (As you can no doubt tell, I have a fairly low esteem of those in the "news" business. Oh, and by the way, don't be alarmed at me telling you I'm a Scientologist. It's my religion -- and I never let religion or politics interfere with my personal relationships -- particularly good relationships -- that I feel I have with you folks from Cacophony! If you disagree with me about my religious views, that's perfectly okay. I never try and disseminate information about something they're not interested in.)

- * Yes, Cacophony does have a number of serious, intelligent people involved in it. People that are willing to spend their time, money and energy creating unusual events to share with others. These people are the doers -- not spectators. To that degree that a person participates in an event, they enjoy the event. (We've had a long-time saying in The B.C.: "You are the party, and the party is you.")
- * What is the philosophy or purpose behind Cacophony?

Well, let me first just report two observations. These are in no way meant to be construed as criticisms or invalidations. They are merely my personal observations.

1) It's interesting to note that when confronted by a thing that the human mind doesn't perceive or fully duplicate -- it creates a significance. Something to "explain" something or "rationalize" something. That I think is the basic mechanics of what may be happening with Cacophony. Cacophony is Cacophony. Just what it says on Rough Draft -- "a network of free spirits...etc., etc. That's it!

2) By calling something a "society," you give people the picture that it is a society in the sense that most people use that word when talking about a group. That there's officers, rules, dues, membership qualifications, purposes, goals, policies, etc., etc. Cacophony, by their own admission, doesn't have any of these things! So, you're putting there, right at the start, a sort of alteration and non-comprehension of a word -- which, by my observation, puts people into a spin. Now this may be totally okay and fun to do, but it does lead to a non-comprehension from people outside of the group.

One of the things that attracted me to Cacophony was their lack of organization and rules and structure! It gives people the opportunity to create within a loose framework (like a "rough draft").

So, in summary, Cacophony is just what they say they are in the descriptor used on Rough Draft. There is no purpose except to have fun -- and if you're looking for a philosophy, perhaps you'd be interested in The Bacchanal Cabal. Our philosophy (which, by the way, is actually written down and has a real structure) is called Partycraft. It's a proprietary applied philosophy that deals with the practical, hands-on application of an events design and production technology that can be used and applied by anyone to better their own events productions.

* What is Cacophony trying to achieve?

Well, actually, since we've already established that Cacophony isn't a society in the traditional, widely-understood sense, it's only real product is Rough Draft. That is basically the sole product of the group. A newsletter that serves as a portal to unusual events and adventures. That's it.

Again, by calling Cacophony a "society," you set people up for something that it's not, and they understandably have a hard time thinking with it.

The sole product of Cacophony -- of that society -- is the Rough Draft. That's the product. That's the statistic. Number of newsletters printed and distributed to qualified unusual events and adventures seekers -- something like that. See?

Now, there are groups that produce events -- such as Michael² and Louise and Larry and Jason and John -- but I've had a hard time thinking with that Cacophony is producing an event -- because Cacophony doesn't exist. Rough Draft does!

* Is there a coherent purpose that guides the actions of the people who put on the events and where will it lead the group in the future?

Two questions here. Yes, there is a coherent purpose that guides the actions of the people who put on events -- but not all the people who put on events have coherent purposes. Take, for instance, this recent "toaster sculpture" thing. What's that all about? I'm afraid it doesn't communicate to me. But that's okay. It may communicate to someone. But is it a coherent purpose? Who knows? Who cares? It sounds like pure silliness to me.

But, if you're looking for coherentness, perhaps Larry's Burning Man or The B.C.'s "toga-parties" are that for you.

Where will all this lead in the future? Well, shit...money and fame, of course! I don't know about you other folks, but I'm tired of bustin' my ass on events that don't turn a profit! I think Cacophony is headed in the right direction. Media exposure, promotions, increasing the size, quality and production value of their events, etc. Hell, how do you think Uncle Bill Graham and Steve Silver got started? (Well, yes, the 60s were a little different era.) But, seriously. Turning a profit on events is a concern of ours in The B.C. After 13 years, we're tired of going in the red or just breaking even. That's why we're delighted to be a part of you wonderful folks! You bring us a great group of qualified, interested, active, lively, intelligent people to our events! Thank you and well done!

- * I appreciate your thoughtfulness in having us all write in our answers to you. Besides, when everyone starts getting loaded on beers, it turns into a party -- and not a serious discussion as what you intended.
- * On the question of participation versus entertainment or parties as events.

Again, two questions. Firstly, there will always be those people that choose to be just a spectator at an event. The people that sit back at say "do me!" Well, that's okay. Not all of us are born to be participants. I, for one, get my jollies by creating effects on people. Blowing them out of their gourds with pleasure, mystery and delight! That's my fun.

As for parties as events...of course! There should never be any exclusionism in Cacophony. By it's very being, Cacophony has always welcomed all events!

- * The tension that exists between control and spontaneity that exists in a group with an essentially anarchistic structure.

Well, some things are going to be spontaneous and some things are going to be structured and controlled. Without some sort of good control, Cacophony itself wouldn't exist! Someone has to control the regular publishing of the Rough Draft, don't they? I don't really understand this question or concern expressed here.

- * Could Cacophony perhaps accommodate a number of well-defined special interest factions within it without fragmenting?

Of course! It already does accommodate special interest factions...The B.C....Burning Man...etc.

Look, I think far too much significance is being placed on this whole issue of what Cacophony is or isn't!

In summary, there is no Cacophony "society!" By choosing to use that word, you alter what Cacophony is and attach a false significance there which, in turn, puts people's minds into a spin.

Cacophony's real and only product is the Rough Draft newsletter.

Actually, using the word 'cacophony' doesn't really make any sense as it's a word that defines harsh, dissonant sounds and is a musical term.

* * *

My personal "recommendation" -- if there is one -- is for Cacophony to drop the name San Francisco Cacophony Society and to just stick with saying that there is a newsletter called Rough Draft published by Louise Jarmilowicz.

To do anything else creates a false significance in people's minds and starts insanity like all of us writing letters about what this is or isn't.

Look, I'll give you an analogy. One that I feel is most appropriate:

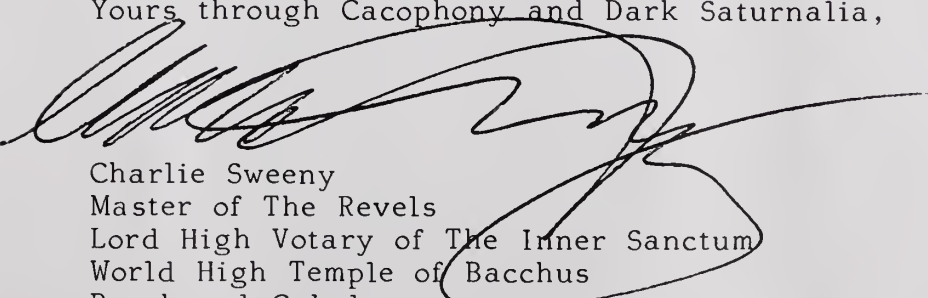
It's like Mike Gunderloy, editor and publisher of Factsheet Five saying that there's really "The Royal High Society of Arcane, Subliminalist Weirdness" -- when, in fact, all there is is Factsheet Five -- a journal dedicated to publishing a directory of the unusual and bizarre. That's it!

I'm sorry for being so "real" here, kids. But, you asked!

I definitely think and most heartily approve of what Cacophony has been doing in the past. Just continue! Don't change a thing! And, for God's sake, let's not start introverting on significances! There are no significances here!

I look forward to seeing all of you in the future and having a laugh and a beer!

Yours through Cacophony and Dark Saturnalia,



Charlie Sweeny
Master of The Revels
Lord High Votary of The Inner Sanctum
World High Temple of Bacchus
Bacchanal Cabal

11/17/90

Reply to the conference:

What's the philosophy/purpose behind the organization?

The Cacophony Society is social organization for eccentric individuals. It provides an alternative for those who don't want to fit into normal society.

What are you trying to prove?

Most people are rigidly confined in mental rules of behavior and appearance which stifles creativity and freedom of expression. We are proving that creative individuals can exercise a wider variety of expression and still remain a cohesive social group.

michaelmichael

1 December '90

Dear Lance

As a relative newcomer to Cacophony, I still know relatively little about how and why it came into being. I cannot presume to say, as founding members might, what philosophy, purpose or goals were projected for the group as it evolved. Consequently, I offer my own observations as those of an outsider, even though my affection and admiration for Cacophony's inner circle have brought me much closer to the center

I'm sure I don't need to explain to any of the participants in this exercise how our society is becoming increasingly passive. For the most part, our entertainments are pre-packaged and consumed. In the effort to keep the 2-dimensional lifestyle at bay, I've been staging odd entertainments since early adolescence. During the entire decade of my twenties, I had an enormous old beach house in Santa Monica that was the site of countless elaborate and unusual events, frequently involving costumes or formal dress. That house became something of a late hippie-era legend in L.A., even though rock'n'roll was never heard between those walls. In all those years, though, I never met anyone who shared my motivation to create events that were well beyond the scope of garden variety parties.

When I came back to San Francisco, I began to hear about the Suicide Club, but of course I never did find them, try as I would. Years later, when I heard about Cacophony, I was similarly drawn. Even before I knew you, there was comfort in knowing that somewhere out there were other maniacs like me.

So what is the purpose of underlying principle behind what we do? I think it was Norman O. Brown who said that the principle illness of contemporary society is that, as adults, we have lost our sense of play. At the very least it could be said that the antics of Cacophony are an antidote to this cultural malady. Cacophony gets people away from the tube and provides active entertainment; it restores a sense of adventure in our routinized existences; it is a forum for acting out fantasies. Most importantly, it brings together a curious mix of people who, for whatever reasons, never really wanted to find that niche in the mainstream.

Any of these things stands alone as sufficient reasons to do what we do. But in the end, you ask, what is it all leading up to? I suppose someone has to ask why it needs to add up to anything at all.

We are living in an age that glorifies achievement and the individual that we are driven to make all our energies count, even those that are our primary sources of pleasure, I'm inclined to say that the enjoyment of something unusual is a perfectly fine end in itself. To be genuinely amused in this life, to be as off-beat or creatively counter-regimental as we can, is all part of the obscure minor art form of living.

This is not to say that other potential goals are invalid. Certainly the intelligence, creativity and energy in this group could be harnessed towards goals more profound than just plain fun. But it's not to be expected from a random group of individuals with extremely divergent personal agendas. What is possible is that certain individuals will come together when a common objective is discovered. A magazine might be born, an art movement launched, an information campaign initiated, films made, enterprises begin.... Much can come of it, but not from the group as a whole, only from the cores within it.

I don't see how core groups that focus on a unified purpose should create problems for the group as a whole. Why should 100 people who are all love midnight picnics care if 10 of them want to start a magazine? If a faction chooses to concentrate its efforts on something of an antisocial nature, it might be problematic. For the most part, though, it seems that factions are a necessary by-product of any group of humans in any circumstances.

Similarly, it's just human nature that there are active participants who will stage events, and passive participants who'll attend them. A person might be a delightful comrade in adventure without being an event planner. After all, writers need readers and actors need audiences; should only writers read books or actors attend plays?

When you ask about control versus spontaneity, I assume you are referring to a member's ability to create an event as one might a work of art, molding and coloring it in a single-minded vision of results, it appears that events are more commonly a matter of efforts by enthusiastic committee. Unfortunately, such committees are unlike a well-selected film crew, a group with complementary visions. I am personally waiting to announce an event until I have all the elements in place to avoid the interference of well-meaning but counter-productive assistance. I do think that anyone creating an event should have the artistic license to realize it exactly as they see it, unless the input of others is requested.

A few last words about Cacophony's rise from the underground: I seriously doubt if we are in any danger of becoming the Kiwanis Club of the '90s. cacophony, like some fringe religion, will only appeal to some. By expanding the mythos, through, we expand our personal power bases as *dei ex machinae*. The color and notoriety of such recognition never hurt anyone, much less those of us who endeavor, in one way or another, to make an impact on the world around us. As more attention is focused on the people who do these unusual things, those people will have opportunities opened to them that they only fantasized about before.

Most affectionately,

A handwritten signature, possibly 'P', written in dark ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be a single letter 'P' with a small loop at the top and a vertical stroke extending downwards.

GREETINGS LANCE,

IN RESPONSE to YOUR Conference letter, I have found the cacophony society to be made up of people with creative and non-judgemental ideals that I like. Its philosophy is headed in each copy of 'Rough draft' coherently, usually going like: "The cacophony society is a randomly gathered network of free spirits united in pursuit of experiences beyond the pale of mainstream society". I don't read any indication that this ~~said~~ society wishes for a goal of homogenizing its practices throughout the world for notoriety or profit, and I am inclined to believe that the best interests of most all individuals involved create and participate in events purely for the sake of enjoying their unique quality.

What I mean by enjoying an event has different levels of meaning for different people, one can feel free to participate in their own way.

Cacophony seems to be the ideal forum for people with some remarkably interesting ideas that they could not, or would not enjoy doing, without the group. At this point in time, the Group has some great encouraging people who attract most any odd event or behaviour with quite unlimited freedom as to what happens.

I feel, however, that there are certain unwritten laws that must be inherent, that usually go without saying due to the nature of the involved. Some of these laws may be the discouragement of monetary profit other than expenses that cover event costs, or the latest representation that this is an apolitical group that doesn't promote personal dogmas of control, or that events should be defined as eccentric and not only for the sake of the common party. - About Party's as events, it seems to me that party's will naturally go with most events anyway, so these party's should strive to be encouraged to have a theme of participation. Participation is what holds a society together, as opposed to passive observing, which all are entitled to as well.

So I have been trying to see the fine line between structure and freedom in the group. I do not consider myself as a spokesman for the cacophony society, this is only a random opinion. Personally, my goal is to keep life interesting, cacophony is that much needed creative realm that I don't want to see become too serious.

I can't forecast cacophony's future, whether it will fall apart ~~or~~ or become something like "Deadheads". My hope is that the number of persons having certain sounds of jarring interests in common discard, will continue to do interesting things.

Sincerely - Svensk Runestone

December 15, 1990

From the editors desk;

In spite of our stated position, anarchy did not get us where we are today. It has taken a lot of organized effort to reach this point.

Two years ago I noticed the potential of the Cacophony Society. It was a small group of individuals doing some strange and exciting things. And there was this somewhat mysterious and stormy past that people hinted about. For the next year, I dug deeper into the history of Cacophony. I learned of Communiversity, the Suicide Club and the Gorilla Grotto, which are a part of our colorful legacy, like it or not. I tried to understand as much as I could about the individuals which were the driving forces behind these groups and most of all I tried to perceive the vision of one charismatic individual by the name of Gary Warne.

I carefully read the newspaper clippings and studied all of the old copies of Rough Draft, the publication which has served (somewhat roughly) as the voice of the Cacophony. My aim was to piece together the story behind the printed page and hear the collective message. I looked into the subscription records and charted the numbers against the history, the activities and the types of events. The collected information seemed to reflect a lot of the problems that the Society was having. In spite of all the fun, Cacophony was burning out members and their friendships at a high rate. The cure for the problem of editor's ego was a six month term, which served to keep the disease isolated until the patient expired.

One year ago, I became the editor of Rough Draft. Subscriptions were declining and there was a very low rate of renewal. Only the hard work and thrifty efforts of one person had kept the mailings going out. Beginning with issue #40, I took steps to increase circulation and keep our current subscribers. The move to larger graphics and a standard text format gave Rough Draft more impact and clarity. Arrangements were made with a local copy center to have each monthly press run printed on better quality, heavier paper and at a lower cost than what we'd been paying. A reader survey was conducted to get feedback from members so as to give more direction to my efforts. The subscription term was increased to one year in order to smooth out the subscription/renewal cycle. A special, one-time mass mailing to expired subscribers brought back several members who had dropped out over a year before. A listing of future events was added to the newsletter to encourage renewals. The section on past events was started in order to get more people involved by letting readers know what they were missing by staying at home.

I have also used a few technical tools and ideas to make improvements. The subscriber list was computerized in order to ease the burden of the monthly mailing and also to help gauge the effectiveness of various efforts to improve circulation. During one month, a coded PO box number was used to test the effectiveness of several distribution techniques. The credibility of Rough Draft as publication has been established by getting each issue out on time and providing a reliable source of information about the Cacophony Society and its activities. In combination with my efforts on the newsletter was the promotion of the Society itself. Several things have been done in order to improve our credentials as a real organization. Our public profile and our ability to communicate has been enhanced with the Cacophony Hot Line and a listing in the phone book. My appeal to other groups doing unusual things to join us under the umbrella of Cacophony has added members to our ranks and fun events to our listings. The addition and constant cultivation of a publicity mailing list has increased our media coverage and gained us many supporters in the press, including various local newspapers, magazines, and radio/TV stations. The reviews and comments appearing in publications outside of California are sparking a much broader interest in the Cacophony Society. Our subscription rate is now rising at a steadily increasing pace. In 1991, I am anticipating that Rough Draft will go to two pages in order to handle all the activities and events that the Cacophony Society will be involved with. However, as we continue to grow, the responsibilities of publishing and planning will become more than one person can handle. In time, it will require a cooperative team of several individuals to produce and distribute the newsletter.

The creativity, the energy and the mystery of the Cacophony Society has always been what it is because of the collective character of the individuals which make it up. Rough Draft is your window to the world. I hope that my efforts to open it up a little has increased everyone's Cacophony enjoyment. I have looked upon Rough Draft (and the promotion of Cacophony) as though it were an event. And like any big event, it has required a lot of planning, direction, time and energy. The future of the Society can not be known for sure, but I believe that we can learn from the past and perhaps avoid the anarchy which destroyed Communiversality, the secrecy which strangled the Suicide Club and the lack of support which leveled the Gorilla Grotto.

By far the most difficult part of all this has been to develop a vaccine against editors disease and then to try it out on myself. If I survive, I shall pass the formula on. But only you, the most active members of the Cacophony Society, will be able to tell me if it succeeds.

Sincerely,

Genieve J. Petrone

THE ADDING UP OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CACOPHONY SOCIETY
submitted by Louis M. Brill

WHAT'S THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE ORGANIZATION

There is no great mystery to the success of the San Francisco CACOPHONY SOCIETY (SFCS) as its intentions, goals and achievements can be summed up in one word: F U N.

SFCS is a challenge to the oppression of the urban landscape, the dreariness of the 9-5 routine, the emptiness of the great beyond, and the threat of being caught up in this existential quagmire, reducing people to dreaded fate of acquiring a pre-programmed worker-bee mentality and life-style.

It's a chance to fight back, to say "Don't fuck with my head." It does so (fights back) by coming to grips with angst and alienation to initiate a change to make a difference in controlling one of the most important parts of our lives; free time. Leisure time is a sacred, an inalienable right. The SFCS has become the crowbar to pry open pockets of opportunities to establish creative alternatives beyond the pre-packaged media pablum or desired, but expensive entertainment opportunities. It has in effect become the court jester of San Francisco, to spoof the city in harmless ways and hopefully illuminate the dreary lives of its worker-bee populous at the very least, and at the very most provide great entertainment for those who partake in the spoof.

The SFCS is a social club with the express purpose of bringing people together to create unusual and interesting things to do and doing them! The doing them part is very important, because most people may think up neat things to do but don't usually have the where-with-all to carry them out.

WHAT IS TRYING TO BE ACHIEVED

Here the SFCS has achieved a mutual admiration society of like-minded people who either want to entertain or be entertained by activities beyond the scope of the mainstream.

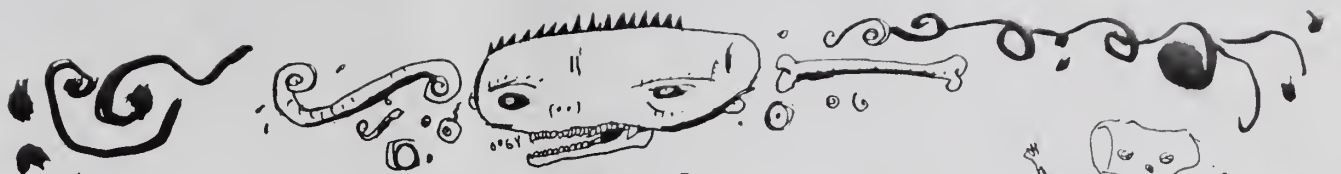
IS THERE A COHERENT PURPOSE

Yes. At the risk of being redundant (me, redundant ?) the SFCS has defined the urban landscape as an open hunting season against mediocrity, cliches, boredom, and raised the question; is there an alternative. The gauntlet has been thrown down, the challenge established. Can we turn the tide ? And how ? And when ?

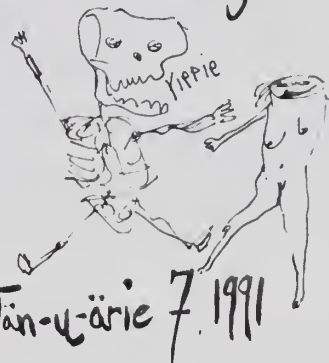
WHERE WILL IT LEAD IN THE FUTURE

Quite frankly, it shouldn't lead anywhere. Remember the great maxim: FUN IS WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE. And that is all the SFCS should be about, how we get there, and what we do , to get there. The plan for getting there is open ended, a free for all scenario of:

"anything goes- within reason-(and then some)".
and remember: "we don't need no stink'n badges, papers, or permits."



FROM THE DESK OF ...
KEVIN CHARLES EVANS



Jan-u-arie 7, 1991

HELL-Ö

MR. LANCELOTT:



It has been a long time since we last spoke, about a few hours-de-vores. ANYWAYS, YES I DID RECEIVE YOUR LETTER REGARDENING THE COCKYPHONY SOCIETY. I WRITTEN THIS AS FAST AS I CAN, BECAUSE OF ITS URGENTLMANCY. MY DEAD UNCLE SAID THAT I SHOULD SPEAK TO A LAWYER, I DID, DIDNT SAY MUCH. I DID ALOT OF COMPLAINING (IM SURE YOU HERD SOME OF IT) AND IN VOLUNTARY IS A MUST, TO LAY DOWN THE SECTAR-SOLO TO YOU, LETTS US SAY THAT WE SAID A MOUTHFUL OF NONSENSE.

We the people of the UNITED NATIONS of CHAOS and OTHER HUMAN TRAITS, DO PROMISE THAT WE WILL BE TRUE TO OURSELVES and WILL RESPECT THE OTHER TRUTHS OF OTHER PEOPLE. WE WILL WORK (OR NOT WORK) OUR MINDS and OTHER VAST ORIFACES TO IMPROVE OUR LEVELS OF FUN, KNOWLEDGE, PLESURE, CREATIVITY and SPELLING and an INFINITE LIST OF OTHER THINGS THAT WE CONSIDER VALUABLE. LET US HELP OURSELVES TO LIFE AND GO BACK FOR SECONDS

Thank You MR LANCELOTT FOR THE TIME and ENERGY SPENT ON THIS PROJECT. MAY THE VOICE OF THE CYNIC ALWAYS RING.

I REALLY DONT KNOW HOW MUCH GOOD THIS LETTER DID



SIN SERINGLY YOURS
IN OZZY

KEVIN CHARLES EVANS
and JAY TOO... DÜDE



The following is a typescript of the letter by Kevin Charles Evans that appears on the preceding page. The original grammar and orthography has been reproduced within the limits of this typewriter. - ed.

FROM the DëSK of...
Këvin Charles EvänS

HeLL-ö Mr. Lanceoid:

Jän-u-ärie 7 1991

it häS Ben alöng Time Sincë Wë Läst Spöked äböute a FEW hours-de-vores. änyways, Yes I DiD Recive Yours LETTëR Regardening the COCKYPHONY society. I WRITTën This as Fast as I Can, Because of iT's URGeNTELMANCY. MY DeaD Uncle Said that I should speak to a LAWyer. I DiD. DiDn't say much. I did a lot of complaining (Im shure you herd some of it) and in volumen is a must, to Laydown The GeeTaR-SoLo to you. LeTTs us say that We Said a mouthful of NONSENSE.

We the PeoPle of The UNited nations of CHaOs and other Human TRAITS, Do PRomise that we will Be TRUë to ourselPs and will Respect the other TRUTHS of other people. WEë WiLL WORK (or NOT WORK) our minds and other Vast ORIFaces To ImPRoVe our LeVels OF FUN. KNOLedGe, PLeSUrE, CReaTivity and SPeLLiNg and an INFINITe LIST OF OTher THINGS THaT We consider VaLuble. LeT US help OURSELFS To LiFE AND GO Bäck FOR Seconds

Thank You mR Lancealot for The Time and energy spent ON This Project. may The Voice of The CYiNIC aLways Ring.

I ReaLLy dont KNOW how much Good This Letter did

SINSeRiNGLY YOURS
IN OZZY

friend, FiEND

KeVIN charles EVANS
and Jay Too...DÜde

AFTERWORD

You can see that I haven't written an answer to my own query. In fact I don't have one yet. As I have said, I am mainly interested in hearing what other people have to say about the Cacophony Society. In doing this I've had to reconsider a number of my own assumptions about what the society is and what it is doing.

From the beginning I've had an ambivalent relationship with Cacophony. This stems from my frustration with seeing that the organization has a vast potential for creativity and serious play, and by extension the fostering of creativity and the liberation of the human spirit. Re-creation in the best sense of the word. The frustration is one of not knowing how to go about optimizing this potential.

Most of the meaning and purpose that the Cacophony Society has lies with individuals, and with the singular and personal meanings that individuals give to the events that they put on. The meaning and purpose of the society then appears as the convergence (or divergence) of these individual meanings and purposes. As such no one is really in control and a sort of rough, pragmatic consensus is reached through the accommodation of various individual needs and desires. And yet there is an organization here that can provide both a form and a forum for the realization of these desires. It is the success and continued existence of the society as a form that supplies what other purpose and meaning it has.

My own idea of the Cacophony Society is that it exists to empower individuals to manifest their dreams, desires and obsessions in some creative way that could be shared as an event. It is a call to create our own version of art, culture and life; to refuse to be entertained and demand to participate in and control our own dreams and their interpretation, rejecting the overdetermined and restrictive meanings supplied by a highly mediated and commoditized culture. It should it will break down some of the barriers between art and life and between the creators of culture and the consumers of culture. To this end people must have some sort of clear intention, even if only tentative, which guides their events. To look to their conscious and unconscious desires, to their fancies and dreams, and from these form some intention that can be realized as an event. I dare to hope for real desire and obsession and the dialogue that would arise between the creator-participants.

As for fun and entertainment; don't get me wrong, I enjoy them. Nonetheless I view them as the side effects of doing something that really interests one. To try and have fun is chimerical. As for entertainment, it's all too easy to find...

Similarly, while the group is a social organization, I do not see this as its main purpose. All groups are social groups. This is as a rule not their stated purpose, but it is always a subtext. Most groups that claim to be merely social are in fact interested in either proselytizing or profit...

I do not intend this as the last word in this conversation. I hope that it will be the beginning of a long and fruitful conversation about our intentions and actions that will last as long as the organization.

Thanks to all of you for your participation

Sincerely,

Lance Alexander

January 10, 1990

APPENDIX

AN INTELLIGENCE TEST

It depends entirely upon your capacity to register your own experience. It goes like this:

If your world is getting:

- 1) Smaller and slower;
- 2) More grim and less fun;
- 3) Less sexy and more dull;
- 4) Impersonal and scary;
- 5) Petty and predictable;

THEN, there's a good chance your overall level of intelligence is...

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However if your world is feeling:

- 1) Brighter and exciting;
- 2) Funnier, instructive and creative;
- 3) Sexier and more attractive;
- 4) Personal, loving and warm;
- 5) Expanded, free and open ended;

THEN, your intelligence level is...

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(Adapted from Angel Tech by Antero Alli)

SUGGESTIONS TO FUTURE NEWSLETTER EDITORS

The following information should appear in every newsletter:

- 1) The name of the newsletter, Rough Draft, in some form of decorative lettering
- 2) The Coccophony Society masthead

****THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CACOPHONY SOCIETY****

- 3) The date and issue number, properly updated

 JULY- ISSUE #10

- 4) Subscription information, properly updated for date and P.O.Box

TO SUBSCRIBE:

- 1) send six SASEs and \$2.00 BOX 199
- or 904 IRVING ST.
- 2) send \$4.00 & your address S.F. CA. 94122

Please send cash, or checks made out to "CASH"
 Please let us know which issue you want us to start your
 subscription with. This is issue #10

- 5) Deadline information properly updated as to date and P.O.Box

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS JULY20
 Send them to us at P.O.Box 199, 904 Irving St. S.F., CA 94122

The following items are also useful to include in each issue

- 1) Notice of an events planning meeting ,with time, date, location, and co-ordinator updated. For example:

FUTURE EVENTS Thursday, July 23
The Owl & Monkey Cafe
1336 9th Ave. 7:30p.m.

There will be an informal gathering to talk about and plan future events. If you have ideas you would like to share, assistance to offer, or would like help organizing a project or event, please join us. We'll be in the back room.

For information:
 Lance, 661-4121

2) Some sort of statement of what you think that Rough Draft/The Cocophony Society is. For example:

ROUGH DRAFT is an opportunity for displaced extraterrestrials, dreamers, artist, urban necromancers, inspired game players, esoteric scholars, wandering spirits, playful adults and wily children to explore their ideas and desires without restrictions. We invite you to participate with us in subverting old realities and creating new ones.

Now, if you want to you can go ahead and change anything you wish to including all of the above. But just be sure that you have all of the pertinent information in your version. If the person who is doing the banking only want cash and checks, then don't say that we'll accept money orders. If the person doing the mailing wants to know which issue the subscriber wants the subscription started with then don't leave that request out of the newsletter. Co-ordinate your efforts with the other volunteers and be sure all information is up to date.

Finally, please give a copy of this , or your own improved version of this, to any new editor.

Thanks for your attention
Lance Alexander
Editor Emeritus

DOING EVENTS---A HOW TO GUIDE

~~~~~

Here is a short explanation of how events find their way into the newsletter and what their basic structure is.

### The Newsletter

This comes out once a month and is paid for by your dues and compiled by a volunteer editor(s). You can list any event you want in the newsletter. There is no censorship, approval, etc.

### Events

Anyone can do an event, and it can involve anything imaginable including, but not limited to, urban adventures, role playing games, visits to unusual locations, classes, performances, and group art works. There are no limitations whatsoever. If people like the idea, they'll come out for it.

To get an event in the newsletter, write (or preferably type) it up, with the name of the event, the date, the time and meeting place, and a description of what is involved (you can make it all a mystery if you want, and surprise us when we come to it). Be sure to list any materials, special clothes, equipment, etc., required. Then mail the event to the newsletter at its address. The deadline for the next month's events is the 20th of the preceding month.

Events don't have to be anything. They don't have to be grand and elaborate, or dangerous, or long, or short, or easy, or hard. If you think it's a good idea, it probably is, and you might as well give it a try. Write it up and send it in.

### The Event Organizer

As the organizer of an event you're the boss. People who come on your event do so with the understanding that they have to play by your rules. If they don't like the rules, then they don't have to play. You can set your event up anyway you like. This is the only time we ever have any leaders.

### Rules (RULES ?)

WE DON'T HAVE ANY RULES,---or officers, or mandatory anything!

I hope this answers any questions about doing events that you might have had. Now it's up to you. Think about what you would like to do, write it up, and send it in.

ROUGH DRAFT  
BOX199  
904 IRVING ST.  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA, 94122



they became the stars of the club. they became the object of other members attention, contemplation, and even adoration. They became the actors with the lead roles, and many of the other members unwittingly became their audience. The senior members became the actors, some with more impressive roles, and ~~many-of-the~~ the majority of the newer members became the audience. The SFSC had ceased to be a participatory experience and had become a spectacle.

As a result the range of types of events steadily narrowed. Those events that were done by the star performers were well attended. ~~to-ent-~~ In an attempt to keep the club alive these events were repeated ad nauseum, in various guises. The situation became repetitious. Emphasis tended to fall on complicated games and spectacular events. New members felt intimidated and felt that they could not compete with these events, not realizing that competition was not the point and was in fact antithetical to the original notion of the SFSC. *LESS CREATIVE / BRAVE INDIVIDUALS COULD EXISTING EVENTS - FINALLY DISCOVERED THEM - & SOUGHT ANSWERS.*

Another problem seems to have arisen from the loss of the original focus that the SFSC had in the beginning. The original attitude was one of taking risks, courting new and unexpected experiences & emphasizing participation of all without competition or expectations about the result. The point was not to be entertaining, to have people approve of what you had done, or to garner applause, it was to follow your own personal vision and get an honest and valid reaction from your event. That reaction was the only true measure of an event.

But as time went on this attitude ceased to be the dominant one. One heard complaints that all risks had been taken, and surmounted, all taboos and sacred cows smashed, and that there were really no new ideas and experiences to be had. Nostalgia set in. Events became repetitious for reasons mentioned above. As events were repeated in one guise or another and little thought seemed to go into just what was the point of them (except for fun/entertainment, valid but ~~not-he-was~~ trying to 'have fun' soon becomes boring in and of itself). Many people seemed to become bored with what was going on and retreated from the club into private life and careers. The club had ceased to be a forum for their personal projects, ideas and obsessions. It became a part time cabaret where certain people were stars and the rest were given walk on parts or ~~acted~~ became an audience.

These amateur theatrics, no matter how ingenious, were no match for the enticements of commercial entertainment and private passions and fetishes. People became bored, they retreated to private life and as this happened the club became more and more of a social club. Realistically this is ~~not~~ always a part of all clubs, but unless it is specifically a social or dating club, this spells the end of the organization as effective for anything else. Good God, how many people who showed up on events ~~seemed~~ confided in me that they saw the club as primarily a way to find romance (get laid)!!! SFSC-Rip.

## What-made the Original SFSC special

- 1 The SfSC was open to just about anything. It had an almost total lack of official rules and structure, something rarely found outside of one's inner life. The attitude was one of 'Do whatever you want to do and list it in the newsletter. The official position was one of openness, experimentation and non judgementalness
2. Originally there seemed to be a conscious realization that the club would be out of control. This out of control situation was then seen as a desirable norm
3. The emphasis was on participation.
4. The focus was on taking risks; physical, social psychological and artistic, ...to change the ~~par~~ and expand the conception of the world held by both the event's originators and participants.
5. A willingness to entertain people's events without expectations as to ~~there~~ their value. Conversely the willingness of those putting on events to defy ~~the~~ expectations of good taste, what's right or correct what is moral, proper, lawful or legal. What was done was a matter of personal conscience and responsibility (and more than occasionally of irresponsibility)
- 6 It was an attack on all limits.
- 7 It managed, through one of its few rules, to avoid political and religious contention and infighting that is forever the bane of creative enterprises.

If short the SFSC provided a forum for the realization of people's fantasies, a place for the expression of outlaw artistic and intellectual conceptions, and a mode for exploring our own minds and our interaction with others. In setting aside limits and taking risks The SFSC in fact created a safe space for creative people to do whatever they please, a world apart though contiguous with the restrictive daily world. A world where our most obscure desires could be explored and acted out, either symbolically or in fact.

Another important aspect of the SFSC was it made the individuals who did become involved feel as if they were a part of something special. They felt that they were in a group of like minded people who stood somehow apart from society in general. A number of people who I've talked to felt that they were outsiders and that the SFSC was a very special group of people who were all outsiders in one way or another. To some extent the secret/conspiratorial aspect of the SFSC was important to this sense of a special identity. People who were initiated into the club were as if they were initiated into a mystery/secret, and this was important as a glue that bonded the group together.

8. Would you be interested in attending a (strictly for fun) Cacophony party?  
Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
9. Do you think Superman could lick Jesus Christ in a fair fight?  
Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
10. Why aren't you creating/hosting Cacophony events?  
A. \_\_\_ No ideas  
B. \_\_\_ Takes too much tyme  
C. \_\_\_ Other (please explain, if possible):
11. Might you do an event if:  
A. \_\_\_ Someone else provided or helped you delop an idea  
B. \_\_\_ You could get help putting on the event  
C. \_\_\_ Other [would you host an event under any circumstances; if so, which?]
12. If you checked "A" above, what are some subjects/areas you might be interested in developing an event around?  
A. \_\_\_ The same as "7" above  
B. \_\_\_ Other (please list):
13. Would you be willing to assist someone else in putting on an event?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ No
14. Would you be potentially interested in/willing to:  
A. \_\_\_ Help devise the event  
B. \_\_\_ Work on preparations for the event  
C. \_\_\_ Take part in actually running the event
15. Are you completely satisfied with "ROUGHT DRAFT" as the same of the S.F.C.S. newsletter?
16. Would you be willing to edit a future issue?
17. Could you provide free photocopying if we provided paper?
18. Would you be willing to help distribute copies of RD?
19. Please list any place you know of where cool, crazed, or creative types hang out (coffee shops, book/record stores, etc) where copies of RD could be left for prospective participants.

## THE CACOPHONY REPORT

Although there is no tyme or space in this already-late mailing for a fiery editorial on the subject, no one reading this should be very surprised to hear that SFCS/Rough Draft is experiencing a critical period. At this point, the very existance of the Cacophony concept depends entirely on the efforts of three individuals and a couple more loyal supporters, most of whom are running out of energy to keep things going. We are mounting a campaign to give Cacophony a new lease on life over the next three months, but it will not work without your help. There are three very important things you can do right away if you are at all interested in seeing this group continue beyond the end of the year: 1) Do an event! If you've had an idea that you've been putting off for various reasons, you shouldn't assume that you'll have more than four more chances to do it. 2) Come to the meeting on Thursday the 21st (see event description for new location). 3) PLEASE complete the following questionnaire and return to our P.O. Box!!

### Le Questionnaire

1. What is the purpose or value of SFCS to you? What would you ideally get out of it?
  
2. To what extent do you feel this idea has been met over the past six months?  

|                                            |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completely        | <input type="checkbox"/> Only Vaguely           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To a great extent | <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On occasion       | <input type="checkbox"/> You're kidding, right? |
  
3. How many Cacophony events have you attended in the past six months? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What types of events are you most likely to take part in?
  
5. What was your all-tyme favourite event?
  
6. What was your all-tyme least favourite?
  
7. Please list some of your favourite activities and/or areas of special interest:

## AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A class where we'll develop short (three to ten page) autobiographies from several entirely different points of view. The project would last a number of weeks. Non traditional and multi media encouraged.

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EVENTS-----after talking with John Dowdell-----9-29-'86

## SUICIDE NOTES

a class where we share our phantasys and stratagies for writing suicide letter What we want to say, who do we wish to make feel guilty, what kind of reasons we have for doing it the way we are etc. and particular stratagies for getting this stuff across

## DO YOU KNOW THE WAY FROM SAN JOSE

Dropping people off in a San Jose suburb with out money or a map and seeing if they can find their way home. Could be done as a race with informed choice to participate, or as a henious suprise...

## COUNTER PROTESTS

Find a political protest or rally that particularly fascinates and/or amuses, and/or apalls you and set up a counter proteadt to it. Be prepared to deal with an uncomprehending and possibly hostile public.

## NEITZCHE TRACTS

Make up and have printed some particularly odd and possibly offensive and or down right bewildering leafletts amd hand them out in a highly public place on a sunday. Be prepared for odd and intense interactions with th general public.

## TAKE PEOPLE SOMEWHERE STRANGE/INTENSE/PERPLEXING WHILE BLINDFOLDED

Enter the unknown and have your worst fears/greatest fantasys fullfilled. The title says it all. Some possibible places could be: weird and evangelical churches, scientology meetings, very odd environments etc.

## BUSHWACKING METRO ADVENTURES SEWER TOUR

Find out where and when the sewer tour will happen. Create strange and disturbing phenomenon or dress up twenty people real, real weird and meet them in the darkest part of the sewew. Give the metro adventurers more than they bargained for.....

THE PARTY AT THE END OF TIME

The world ends at 2:00 a.m. This is your last chance to party, your last chance to do and say all those things that you always wanted to do. Hurry up, time is running out.

SELF INTERVIEWS - ALL WOULD BE TAPED & TAPES GIVEN TO THOSE INTERVIEWED

I would like to have people interview me about various important issues in my life, I set the subject but they can ask any question that they want and press as hard as they want for an answer. They cannot ~~lie~~ <sup>ARROG</sup> and I cannot lie. Through this process I hope to be able to explore dimensions of myself that are normally hidden. These would include the volume and pitch of my voice, my choice of words, attempted evasions and what and how I talk under pressure. In return I will interview ~~an~~ the interviewer on any subject that they want.

A TRIP TO THE MUSEUM OF THE UNKNOWN

It's in mill valley, ask Louis Brill

TATTOO PARLORS

A visit to lyle Tuttles famous tattoo parlor and museum, where we will all get tattoos (only the stouthe hearted need apply! ). An expensive event 'cause tattoos start at \$25.00 and go up from there

9-22-'86)

4 NON TRADITIONAL THANKSGIVING DINNER OF SOME SORT

YOU WILL BE FORCED TO DRINK EGGNOG (a pre X-Mas event)

Wherein we arm ourselves with a quantity of eggnog, several blenders, and brandy, rum, & whisky. ~~Will~~ We'll proceed by car (drivers to remain sober) to friends and acquaintances houses, arrive unannounced and make them drink eggnog. Then we'll take them prisoner, along with their blender and make them accompany us to the next victims house....ad infinitum.

KITTY GENOVESE MEMORIAL EVENT

Dummies and <sup>ALLEYS</sup> manequins are positioned as assailants and victims in darkened ~~alleys~~ late at night and cheap tape recorders blare out violent dialogue. Will anyone intervene or call the police? They didn't in poor kitty's case.

INFILTRATING A NEW AGE FAIRE

Posing as one or more "New Age" groups we will rent a booth to distribute information at the fair. What we will actually do to the unsuspecting visitors will be a group project and anyone's guess. I suggest that it be less than enlightened.....

## SOME CACOPHONIC THOUGHTS

**Cacophony Caberet** - A monthly or bimonthly event held in an obliging beer bar or coffee house. Like the original European cabarets it could have a chansonnier/moderator who introduces the acts and provides a critical, sarcastic social commentary on current affairs in the form of songs and doggerel verse. The cabaret itself would consist of skits, poetry, music, and mini-events by Cacophonists and other exhibitionistic persons who have an act that they want to tale to the stage under the aegis of the SFCS. Perhaps performance art could be part of the presentation. It might be worth while to talk to Kevin Radley who used to teach performance art at the Academy of Art. He was fired when they reorganized the art department and now teaches his class through The Lab. A cabaret could possibly act as a venue for his student's work.

**Cacophonous Annual** - An annual magazine as strange and scandalous as Re Search or Amok, but less trendy and perhaps more elegant and sophisticated... Of course also include practical information on how to do events as well as a chronicle of events that we have done in the preceding year. The annual would have to be done as someone's 'event' so that it could be effectively edited. The pure anarchy of accepting any and all submissions that cross your desk in is the death of anything like quality.

**Cruel Childhood** - A series of videotaped interviews with individuals about cruel acts committed against animals (pouring salt on snails, electrocuting cats, catching pigeons in rat traps baited with birdseed) and other children (including but not limited to theft, lying, beating, hazing, etc...). the individuals could face the camera barefaced or hide their identity (paper bags over their heads ?). The tape could then be edited down and shown at an event. I have also thought about the idea of interviewing men about childhood cruelty to animals and women about cruelty toward adolescent boyfriends and then editing these interviews together to some amusing effect.

**Cacophony T-shirt** - Issued once or annually as a fund raiser.

**What's Not OK** - One of the ways I have found to identify the repressed desires of society is to look at what is popular in the media at the time. Unacceptable impulses that cannot be be acted out in real life are often depicted in the films, TV shows, lyrics of popular songs etc. If we look at these what deviate, repressed impulses do we find and how do we use them to create events.

**Preachin' for Nietzsche** - In which we gather together a number of people in conservative clothes, a card table a megaphone and go to the cable car turn-around at Powell and Market and hand out tracts that we have created that talk about Nietzsche's philosophy. The title of the tracts and our rallying cry would of course be 'God is dead !'. The tourists and the itinerant street preachers would provide the wild card in this event.

**Childhood Pyromania Revisited** - An exploration of all those thing that go fast, burn and explode that fascinated us so in our pre-adolescent years. This could include homemade fireworks. tennisball cannons, zip guns, and other infernal devices.

**Palace of the Bizarre** - Events, perhaps enter the unknowns, where we go to the various curious entertainments and shows that are held at the Cow Palace. These include; tractor pulls, monster truck races, fuel-altered mud racing, and gun and knife ('gun and hate') shows. This is just the type of popular culture that most Cacophonists have had little contact with and I think that they will be surprised and amused by it... Oh, I almost forgot...Big Time Wrestling is presented there too !

Cacophony Seminars - How to seminars on practical skills that would be of use to the Cacophonous individual:

'How to Create a Reputation' - the mechanics of personal publicity. How to inform people about who you are... or who you would like to be perceived as....

'The Design of Games' - Types of games and how to organize them. How to dress up your games in a specific fictional or period costume. Achieving a balance between atmosphere and playability (competition). etc...

'How to do Events' - Practical hints, not philosophy etc.

What Do You Really Want ? - A column in the expanded Rough Draft that would print letters sent to us that expressed peoples true obsessions and desires...No not those trivial, practical desires regarding sex, money and status that society tells us are practical and acceptable (though often they are called unacceptable). No, what I'm talking about is our real, totally impractical and poetic desires that we had when we were younger and did not know that they were impossible and therefor not to be desired but only to be repressed and forgotten. Me, I have always wanted to be a werewolf or perhaps a rose bush or have a fireside chat with Ben Franklin and the Marquise de Sade....How about you...

The Marquise de Sade's Birthday Party - In honor of that great French nobelman whose ideas about liberty are too little known and whose ideas about pain too well known. His birthday is on June 2nd and should be celebrated with readings, lectures by dominatrixes and dungeon masters, appropriate food (hot chiles & licorice whips ?) etc. etc...

Lance Alexander

December 26, 1990

Addenda:

Stencil Projects - Using stencils and spray cans to attract attention:

**Murder Locations:** - Stenciling some agreed upon design at the sight of murders committed in S.F.. Stencil should include the date of the killing and perhaps the victim's name. Design might be based on traditional funerary ornament or on some completely different and modern design. It might be necessary to find out how to go about locating actual murder sites. Of course we could only do this for murders that occur in public places.

**Fictitious Organizations** - 'The Islamic Speedmetal Brotherhood', Organization for the Liberation of Necrophilia', The Futurist Terrorist Network, Cyber-Reich....etc., etc., what have you. Through the use of stencils and the selective use of press releases and letters to the editors and even tips to the authorities we can create a virtual existence for a non-existent group. Imagine the headline, "Cyber-Zombies Stalk Haight"....the possibilities for creative misinformation are endless...

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LA

Addenda - RE: Murder Locations, this would only be done for murders that were announced in the newspapers and would be done with the idea of making dangerous and violent neighborhoods visible by making the location and number of murders committed in the city visible.



## MORE CACOPHONIC THOUGHTS

**A Spurious Controversy** - A group project where a series of letters are written to the editorial pages of the newspapers and to various institutions such as the Better Business Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, or, say, Glide Memorial Church protesting some nonexistent incident or situation. Such a situation could be as simple as the scandalous behavior of local merchants to out of town visitors, or the ugliness of certain downtown buildings. Or it could be something more controversial..... The idea is to plant this falsehood in the media and see how far it goes and where it shows up.

**Romantasy** - Romantasy is a new shop at 199 Moulton in the Marina (Tel. 673-3131). It specializes in erotic paraphernalia for yuppies. It holds classes on S&M, fetishes and other such things so as to educate their customers on what to do with their products. Now, this might be worth investigating...I sense that there is the possibility of finding an event or the idea for an event here.

**A Location** - There is an authentic German alpine lodge with a beer garden and a large, raised outdoor dance floor just outside of Mt. Tamalpais park. It is owned by a German group, 'The Friends of the Woods' and seems to date from the 1920's. It can be rented. It might be the perfect location for a live role playing game, such as a detective game.

**Scavenging** - A novel form of that once popular pastime, the scavenger hunt. Just how novel it can be will depend on the type of items ask for, the use of some sort of theme to give the hunt a specific, exotic atmosphere and the types of impediments that can be placed in the way of the competing teams. What about, say a 1960's scavenger hunt where the participants have to wear costumes from that period and look for items made during those years.

LA/12-27-90

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**Cacophony Classifieds** - Bring the classified ads back to Rough Draft. They could only be placed in the newsletter by subscribers. They could be either mainly for the exchange of information and services or they could be used for money making ventures, or both. I'm not sure how this would conflict with the various ideas of what Cacophony is about and it might be better to run the adds as an 'event' so that the ads would't be viewed as being endorsed by the organization as a whole.

**Spy Shop** - There's supposed to be a shop here in the city that deals in equipment for and books about espionage. Sounds like fun and useful stuff. Unfortunately I haven't been able to locate it. Does anyone know where this shop is located ?

LA/1-6-91

**Cacophonic Lectures** - An occasional salon that books strange lectures by eccentric individuals, curious societies, and outlaw organizations. New sources of inspiration and ideas...

LA/1-14-91

ROUGH DRAFT

(apologies for spelling and typos)

"Anyone who does anything original never repeats themselves. And if your original and clever you can do the same things and change them enough so they don't have the same repeated effect...so it's not a copy of what you've done before."

Mark Pauline

SOME NOTES ON ORGANIZING EVENTS; a personal view.

Intro

The SFSC was the resultant product of a long process that started with the broad range of people, ideas and projects represented in Communiversity. Personally I'm interested in reinitiating the open ended evolutionary process that involves creative people and allows them to interact in a relatively unstructured manner. What I would like to see, in short, is a forum for the realization of peoples fantasys, a place for the realization of outlaw artistic and intellectual cōnceptions, and a mode for exploring our own minds and our interactions with others. A setting aside of limits, and taking real risks to create a space where people can do what they please, a world apart though contiguous with the restrictive world of daily life, a world where our most obscure desires and obsessions could be explored and acted out, either symbolically or in fact.

I am interested in reviving a process and not a specific product, the latter SFSC. Reviving this product with it's unwritten tacit structure and assumptions would, I'm affraid, not be half as interesting or as likely to succeed

What fallows are some of my thoughts on what could make this new venture a great success.

## Getting Started

The goal as I see it is to create an open ended situation that is conducive to the development of a semi-coherent, motivated, self-starting and self-perpetuating group of people willing to design and participate in a variety of projects/events/classes. Conversely the question could be, How do we go about starting up a group and at the same time avoid those problems that lead to non-participation and stagnation in the SFSC. I confess that I don't have an all-encompassing answer. But I do have some concrete suggestions that could be examined and perhaps tried.

### Personal Recruitment of Interesting, Creative People

Instead of waiting for exceptional people to come to us and offer ideas we should actively and personally recruit them. Personal contact and interaction is a key element to putting together a good initial group. A ~~new~~ newsletter or flier seldom motivates people as well as one to one contact and communication does.

### Encouragement of a Very Wide Variety of Events, Projects, & Classes

Through one to one contact and through the newsletter let people know that we are open to and accepting of an extremely wide variety of activities. Another way to make the point would be for us to do a wide variety of activities ourselves, avoiding repetition, as an example of the potential of the group and situation.

### Stage Open-Ended Events

Make it a point to regularly design and schedule open-ended events that encourage participation and responsibility for the direction and the outcome of the event. (Example: patchwork quilt events.)

### Events that Lead to Bonding/Friendship/Trust/Group Solidarity

People need to feel that they belong to the group, that they are not just spectators, and that what they do is important and respected. When people feel that they are accepted and paid attention to, they will continue to ~~come~~ come to events, feel encouraged to do events, and take risks (just ask any cult leader)

Sandy's idea that we could initially do some small events that are unannounced, to which we personally invite interesting people is a good one. Also good are events that allow people to get to know one another (eg. s; Lock yourself in a room and see if you can agree, Telling your own story) Events where everyone participates equally (Saffron's mask making group) and events that use self-revealing psychological games are ~~also~~ good for fostering those personal contacts that lead to full participation in the group and a commitment to the process.

Another useful idea is for a specific ritual for the new members of the group. Enter the unknown was a prime example of this.

(Parenthetically, any event where people are isolated and on edge, and either in the dark or blindfolded for a prolonged period tends to foster feelings of intimacy and trust among the participants)

## Sharing Fantasies, Assuptions, Goals

Design events/Cclasses/Get Togethers that allow people to share their concept of what they are trying to accomplish within the over-all group. To encourage them to see if their idea generates any energy and/or is shared by other people

## Mailing List

Recruitin initially from new sources, and developing a mailing list from interested people. Give the situation a few months before bringin in a whole slew of people from the old SFSC/Grotto nexus, People who have perhaps already fallen onto the passive, spectator role or have a desire to dig up andx revive the rotting corpse of the long deceased SFSC and try to bring new life into it.

## Interfacing With Other Groups

New members and new ideas could be had by interfacing with already existing groups we find interesting. This could be done openly or surepitiiously(infiltration). Some examples are: Outdoors Unlimited, Seirra Club Rock Climbing Section, The Beef Collective.....

## The Newsletter-

I expect that a mothly newsletter is still the best way of letting people know about events. But the newsletter could be much more than a calander. I envision it as a means of communication among the members of the group , a place to share ideas enthusiam, obsessions fetishes....as a forum for debate ... as a place to ask for information and haelp with projects...as a showcase for art and writing.... in otherwords more of a journal than a newsletter...something that can incite dreams and action as well as list events. A means of two way communication...with comemnts and critiques of events and attitudes...a means of feedback and of starting fights.

The newsletter could also act as a skills exchange eiyher as a means of payment for a costly class/event, or as a way of locating people with the skills needed to facilltate a project/event

It would be interesting to have the various active participants write short to medium length statements about what they are trying to accomplish by doing classes/events/ projects....What their conceptual background is ,what intrests or obsessions led to an event or a style of doing things, past experiences etc. (we could each start doing this in the second newsletter and fallowing ones)

[ This may be too much to expect out of a monthly newsletter and its rotating publisers and editors.... Perhaps it would be worthwhile to put togethe ra quarterly journal to handle the longer peices of writing (as per a suggestion once made by Jayson Wechter) I'd be willing to handle this on a permanent basis for a t least the first year. ]

## THE QUESTION OF STRUCTURE

The relatively unstructured format of the SFSC was what made it special. But it also ~~made-it-~~ allowed for the development of an unwritten and often unacknowledged structure, the inadvertent domination of events by individuals and the rank non participation. So I've ask myself as well as some wx members if they thought some kind of non intrusive, benign format or structure might be useful. There was no concensus on this and I do not have any answer. But I do think that the question is important and deserves considerable thought and some discussion.

## SOME SUGGESTIONS: & QUESTIONS

### -Facillitators/Coordinators

A rotating position of facillitator or coordinator that would be passed to all members of the group at one time or anothe rhas been suggested. This Person(persons?) ~~These-Peeple~~ would help to get events together, and assist with information about resources and individuals. They could also be charged with the job of making sure that all members had an E equal voice and ability to participate

### -Mandatory Participation Requirement

Put on or al least help put on one event per year or be barred from participation,. Do we need a 'contribute or go home' rule?

### -Guidelines & Written Information

Written Material about, 1)Our conception of what we are trying to do individually and/or as a group. 2)How to stage an event, project, or class, mainly suggestions with lots of examples of events of the past or planned for the future so as to show how wide our conception of events is. Should these materias be written? given to all members? be available on request?

### No Politics/Religion rule

One of the fw fw few rules of the SFSC seems to have been, 'No overtly political oganization events and no evangelizing for a religion', Is this a good rule, do we need it?

### Esoteric? or Exoteric?

The SFSC, though supposedly not a secret organozation had a tendency to function as one; it had a distintly conspiritorial aspect. Do we want to continue this?

(Thanks to Sandy for reading the very rough draft and making suggestions and contributing ideas)

August 1986

ROUGH DRAFT  
(apologies for spelling and typos)

"Anyone who does anything original never repeats themselves. And if you're original and clever you can do the same things and change them enough so they don't have the same repeated effect...so it's not a copy of what you've done before.

Mark Pauline

SOME NOTES ON ORGANIZING EVENTS: a personal view.

Intro

The San Francisco Suicide Club (SFSC) was the resultant product of a long process that started with the broad range of people, ideas and projects represented in Communiversity. Personally I'm interested in re-initiating the open ended evolutionary process that involves creative people and allows them to interact in a relatively unstructured manner. What I would like to see, in short, is a forum for the realization of peoples fantasies, a place for the realization of outlaw artistic and intellectual cinceptions. and a mode for exploring our own minds and our interactions with others. A setting aside of limits, and taking real risks to create a space where people can do what they please, a world apart though contiguous with the restrictive world of daily life, a world where our most obscure desires and obsessions could be explored and acted out, either symbolically or in fact.

I am interested in reviving the process and not a not a specific product, the latter SFSC. Reviving this product with it's unwritten, tacit structure and assumptions would, I'm afraid, not be half as interesting or as likely to succeed.

What follows are some of my thoughts on what could make this new venture a great success.

Getting Started

the goal as I see it is to create an open ended situation that is conducive to the development of a seni-coherent, motivated, self-startin and self-perpetuating group of people willing to design and participate in a variety of projects / events / classes. Conversely the question could be, "How do we go about starting up a group and at the same time avoid those problems that lead to the non-participation and stagnation in the SFSC. I confess that I don't have an all encompassing answer. But I do have some concrete suggestions that could be examined and perhaps tried.

Personal Recruitment of Interesting, Creative, People

Instead of waiting for exceptional people to come to us and offer ideas we should actively and personally recruit them. Personal contact and inter-action is a key element to putting together a good group. A newsletter or flyer seldom motivates people as well as one-to-one contact and communication does.

## Encouragement of a Wide Variety of Events, Projects, & Classes

Through one-to-one contact and through the newsletter let people know that we are open to and accepting of a wide variety of activities. Another way to make the point would be for us to do a wide variety of activities ourselves, avoiding repetition, as an example of the potential of the group and situation.

### Stage Open-Ended Events

Make it a point to regularly design and schedule open-ended events that encourage participation and responsibility for the direction and the outcome of the event. (Example: patchwork quilt events.)

(Note: A patchwork quilt event is one where each participant is expected to have contrived a small event of short duration which will, along with the events of the others, be carried out on the same evening with the participation all of the others.)

### Events that Lead to Bonding / Friendship / Trust / Group Solidarity

People need to feel that they belong to the group, that they are not just spectators, and that what they do is important and respected. When people feel that they are accepted and paid attention to they will continue to come to events, feel encouraged to do events, and take risks (just ask any cult leader).

Sandy's idea that we could initially do some small events that are unannounced, to which we personally invite interesting people is a good one. Also good are events that allow people to get together to know one another (Examples: "Lock yourselves in a small room and see if you can agree on anything", "Telling your own story"). Events where everyone participates equally (Saffron's mask making group). and events that use self revealing psychological games are both good for fostering those personal contacts that lead to full participation in the group and a commitment to the process.

Another useful idea is for a specific ritual for the new members of the group. "Enter the Unknown" was a prime example of this.

(Note: Enter the Unknown was the initiatory event used by the SFSC. Different each time it involved people participating in an event where they had no idea what was going to happen. Often it tended toward some sort of suspenseful ordeal where everyone except the leaders were blindfolded.)

(Parenthetically, any event where people are isolated and on edge, and either in the dark or blindfolded for a prolonged period tends to foster feelings of intimacy and trust)

### Sharing Fantasies, Assumptions, Goals

Design events / classes / get togethers that allow people to share their concept of what they are trying to accomplish within the overall group. To encourage them to see if their ideas generate any energy or are shared by other people.

### Mailing List

Recruit initially from new sources and then develop a mailing list of interested people. Give the situation a few months before bringing in a whole slew of people from the old SFSC / Gorilla Grotto nexus, people who have perhaps already fallen into the passive, spectator role or have a desire to dig up and revive the rotting corpse of the long deceased SFSC and try to bring

it back to life.

### Interfacing with Other Groups

New members and new ideas could be had by interfacing with already existing groups we find interesting. This could be done openly or surreptitiously (infiltration).

### The Newsletter

I expect that a monthly newsletter is still the best way of letting people know about events. But the newsletter could be more than a calendar. I envision it as a means of communication among the members of the group, a place to share ideas enthusiasms, obsessions, fetishes... as a forum for debate... as a place to ask for information and help with projects.. as a showcase for art and writing... in otherwords more of a journal than a newsletter...something that can incite dreams and action as well as list events. A means of two way communication...with comments and critiques of events and attitudes... a means of feedback and of starting fights.

The newsletter could also act as a skills exchange either as a means of payment for a costly class / event, or as a way ofpaument for locating people with skills needed to facilitate a project or event.

It would be interesting to have the various active participants write short to medium length statements about what they are trying to accomplish by doing classes / events / parojects...what their conceptual background is, what interests or obsessions led to an event or a style of doing things, past experiences, etc. (We could start doing this in the second newsletter and the following ones.)

(This may be to much to expect out of a monthly newsletter and its rotating publisher and editors...Perhaps it would be worthwhile to put together a quarterly journal to handle the longer prices of writing, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I would be willing to handle this on a permanent basis for at least the first year.)

### THE QUESTION OF STRUCTURE

The relatively unstructured format of the SFSC was what made it special. But it also allowed for the development of an unwritten and often unacknowledged structure, the inadvertent domination of events by a few individuals and rank non-participation by others. So I've ask myself as well as some ex-members if they thought some kind of non-intrusive, benign format or structure might be useful. There was no consensus on this and I do not have any answer. But I do think that the question is important and deserves considerable thought and some discussion.

### SOME SUGGESTION AND QUESTIONS

#### Facilitators / Coordinators

A rotating position of facilitator or coordinator that would be passed to all of the members of the group at one time or another has been suggested. This person(s) would help to get events together, and assist with information about resources and individuals. They could also be charged with the job of making sure that all members had an equal voice and ability to participate.

#### Mandatory Participation Requirement

Put on or at least help put on at least one event per year or be barred from participation. Do we need a 'contribute or go home' rule ?



## Guide lines and Written Information

Written material about: 1) Our conception of what we are trying to do individually and /or as a group. 2) How to stage an event, project, or class. Mainly suggestions with lots of examples of events of the past or planned for the future so as to show how wide our conception of events is. Should these materials be written ? Given to all members ? Be available on request?

## No Politics / Religion Rule

One of the few rules of the SFSC seems to have been: "No overtly political organization events and no evangelizing for a religion." Is this a good rule, do we need it ?

## Esoteric or Exoteric ?

The SFSC, though supposedly not a secret society had a tendency to function as one; it had a distinctly conspiratorial aspect. Do we want this ?

(Thanks to sandy for reading the very rough draft and making suggestions and contributing ideas.)

## DOING EVENTS---A HOW TO GUIDE

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Here is a short explanation of how events find their way into the newsletter and what their basic structure is.

The Newsletter

This comes out once a month and is paid for by your dues and compiled by a volunteer editor(s). You can list any event you want in the newsletter. There is no censorship, approval, etc.

Events

Anyone can do an event, and it can involve anything imaginable including, but not limited to, urban adventures, role playing games, visits to unusual locations, classes, performances, and group art works. There are no limitations whatsoever. If people like the idea, they'll come out for it.

To get an event in the newsletter, write (or preferably type) it up, with the name of the event, the date, the time and meeting place, and a description of what is involved (you can make it all a mystery if you want, and surprise us when we come to it). Be sure to list any materials, special clothes, equipment, etc., required. Then mail the event to the newsletter at its address. The deadline for the next month's events is the 20th of the preceding month.

Events don't have to be anything. They don't have to be grand and elaborate, or dangerous, or long, or short, or easy, or hard. If you think it's a good idea, it probably is, and you might as well give it a try. Write it up and send it in.

The Event Organizer

As the organizer of an event you're the boss. People who come on your event do so with the understanding that they have to play by your rules. If they don't like the rules, then they don't have to play. You can set your event up anyway you like. This is the only time we ever have any leaders.

Rules (RULES ?)

WE DON'T HAVE ANY RULES,---or officers, or mandatory anything!

I hope this answers any questions about doing events that you might have had. Now it's up to you. Think about what you would like to do, write it up, and send it in.

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An Introductory Note

One evening in August of 1986 Louis Brill called me to say that a number of people from the defunct San Francisco Suicide Club were getting together to talk about doing some events (the catch word that we used to describe our adventures, projects, and pranks) and ask me if I would like to join them. We met in a coffee house and talked over old times and future plans. If I remember correctly we were: Jean Moshofsky, Sandy Hatch, Sara (Saffron) Jeziorski, Joe Weinstein, John (Pepper) Dowdell, Louis Brill, and myself.

During the meeting it occurred to me that while I liked the idea of getting together again to do some events and perhaps even form a group again, I wanted to avoid some of the problem that I had encountered in the SFSC. In particular I wanted to avoid the clannish exclusivity that had grown up in that group as well as the incestuousness and non-participation that had developed.

Now, I had never done an event in the Suicide Club. I had gone on events and had helped other people, but was mainly a follower. This time I decided to get into the center of things. I went home and the next day and wrote up the attached remarks to present to my friends when we met again in a few days. Originally it had included much detailed criticism of the Suicide Club, but Sandy's suggestion I cut most of this out and tried to focus attention on positive ideas. My criticisms were discussed with the group but never presented to them in written form. My idea in doing this was to promote some serious, conscious thought about what we were doing rather than just copy the past. To that extent it worked somewhat. While Cacophony has a resemblance to the SFSC it has succeeded in creating it's own identity and quirky style. If this critique contributed to that then it served it's purpose and that makes me happy.

At the meeting where we discussed these questions, I managed to get myself appointed editor of the newsletter, secretary, and treasurer by sheer force of egotism and bad manners, an attitude that I maintained for the thirteen months of my editorship.

Sandy Hatch helped extensively on the first issue, and Elliot Goliger on the second. After that Louise Jarmilowicz became the art director and then the second editor, after I resigned. Since then editorship has changed several times when someone else has demanded to participate. Anarchistically, we let them have the whole thing including the key to the cash box.

The copy of the 'rough draft manifesto' that has been attached to this is in the main the same as the one given out in '86. I have cleaned up the spelling to the best of the ability of my typewriter's spell-checker and have put in some short notes and added a few words here and there so it will make better sense to someone who was not in the original group or the SFSC.

Also I have attached a copy of what came out of our discussion of event guidelines. It was given out to subscribers to the newsletter for a number of years and some version of it may still be (hey, so I'm a little out of touch !). It's in large part derived from an earlier page of suggestions written by an SFSC member and that I used with his approval.

Lance Alexander

P.S. The newsletter, and originally the group, was known as "Rough Draft" 'cause when people wanted to know what to call it, Louis overruled all of the lame suggestions and pointed to the apologetic title on the top of the first page. The name stuck, if only for the newsletter.

Lance Alexander
1377 11th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
94122

November 7, 1990

Wanda Hoberg
The City
The City Building,
1095 Market Street
San Francisco, CA
94122

Hello Wanda,

Here's the information about Cacophony that I said I would get for you. Since I talked with you last Tuesday I have given some thought to the questions you asked me. I looked into my files and found the notes for an essay on why I do events. This, I think, will your questions better than my rambling monologue.

Why I Do Events

I can only speak for myself and not as a spokesman for the SFCS. After giving some thought to the question I have found that there several reasons that I do events:

- 1) Creating imaginative events grew out of a profound dissatisfaction with mediated experience. Too much of modern life is lived second hand by way of words and images that are provided to us by the information and entertainment media. One begins to think other's thoughts, dream other's dreams and live other's lives. This crowds out one's real life and attempts to substitute for it. One ends up as a spectator to the world and to one's life. This is boring and ultimately robs one of initiative, imagination, originality and any sense of self as a causative and creative of one's own life.
- 2) I have a sincere desire to emulate, in my own way, those people I see as creative and adventurous.
- 3) I enjoy losing myself in intense experiences with a particular desire for novelty and the sublime.
- 4) I enjoy initiating other people into those realms of experience that enlarge their and my sense of life and it's nearly unlimited and unexplored (and sadly often unimagined and unimaginable) possibilities.

Creating events allows me to explore certain unarticulated desires, dreams and obsessions that have manifested themselves in a latent and limited way in my daily life. New ideas and roles can be acted out in events and their results seen in the reaction to the participants. The event becomes a sort of laboratory where the mind can interact with the world in a playful way. Archetypal roles and situations can be acted out, examined, modified, burlesqued, challenged, destroyed; pleasures and dreams amplified; obsessions artistically indulged; rebellions carried out. Knowledge, pleasure, and freedom are the goals; their limits the enemy.

An event should embody some of these ideas and feelings. It is not necessarily safe. Some sort of risk should be inherent. The game must be worth the candle. Moreover it must have a certain integrity of motive. To do an event just to do an event, just for something to do, is a pain and is often boring to both it's creator and to the participants. The same goes double for copying events and trying to be clever. Good events should be rooted in one's life and desires and the results should further these.

An event should also get an authentic reaction out of people. I don't care if people love my events or hate them. I want to do something that gets a real reaction and not just a lukewarm "Well it was ok, but I'd just as soon go to a club."

As such an event is not just an entertainment, it has a meaning for the person putting it on and should convey some of that meaning to the participants. This is not to deny the social aspects of the event, merely to say that these should not be their only reason for existing. If that's what you want to do maybe you should throw a party...

Finally, allowing myself one historical touchstone, here is a quote from André Breton that sheds some light on why I do events.

If he still retains a certain lucidity, all he can do is turn back toward his childhood which, however his mentors may have botched it, still strikes him as somehow charming. There, the absence of any known restrictions allows him the perspective of several lives lived at once; this illusion becomes firmly rooted within him; now he is only interested in the fleeting; the extreme facility of everything. Children set off each day without a worry in the world. Everything is near at hand, the worst material conditions are fine. The woods are white or black, one will never sleep.

But it is true that we would not dare venture so far. It is not merely a question of distance. Threat is piled upon threat, one yields, abandons a portion of the terrain to be conquered. This imagination which knows no bounds is henceforth allowed to be exercised only in strict accordance with the laws of an arbitrary utility; it is incapable of assuming this inferior role for long and, in the vicinity of the twentieth year, generally prefers to abandon man to his lusterless fate.

This state of mind and being, this lusterless fate, is what I am fighting against. Events should liberate the imagination, desires, dreams and spirit of both the creators and the participants. The type of person attracted to Cacophony then is one that feels this same need to recapture those portions of their mind and life that have been suppressed and appropriated and sold back to them in a comodified, mediated form. To participate in Cacophony is to demand the return of your dreams, and desires and nothing less.

I hope this serves to both clarify and amplify my previous remarks, and I hope that you enjoy reading the enclosed materials. Among them are a copy of the querulous essay I wrote when we first met to found the society in '86 and a copy of a part the first newsletter which has the founding members thoughts on what the SFCS should be.

Sincerely,

